



ASPIRA of New York, Inc.

*ASPIRA — "the organization
best able to meet
the needs of
the Hispanic community."*

Independent survey, Coca Cola, U.S.A.



ASPIRA:

Who we are

ASPIRA of New York is a private not-for-profit educational and leadership development agency. Its mission is to provide a vehicle through which Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics can develop the skills to make significant contributions and become leaders in the community. **ASPIRA** was conceived by Dr. Antonia Pantoja in 1955. It was clear to Dr. Pantoja, a prominent educator, that the energy of Hispanic youth was not being directed toward the betterment of the community. Along with a number of other professionals she advanced the **ASPIRA** concept, and in 1961 the first office was opened with grants from private foundations.

ASPIRA of New York is one of several associations nationwide (in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Florida and Puerto Rico). Each functions independently, yet shares the same goal: community development via education.

ASPIRA of New York's programs are designed to keep students on a positive, measurable developmental track. Once in the "**ASPIRA** Process," Aspirantes discover a network of support services and activities, which help them along the way as they strive to reach their goals.

Since its founding, **ASPIRA** has been a positive force in the success of more than 35,000 Puerto Ricans and other Hispanics. Today, **ASPIRA** of New York is an established voice on pro-Hispanic community educational issues.



ASPIRA:

What we do

The Youth Leadership Development Program is the backbone of the "ASPIRA Process." Through this program we offer cultural enrichment activities, leadership training, academic services and creative workshops — activities that generally cannot be found together in one place. **ASPIRA** leadership clubs are active at high schools throughout the city.

The Talent Search Project provides an opportunity for young people who demonstrate an ability for college study to apply themselves at an appropriate academic level. The project assists them in obtaining financial aid, and provides academic counseling, campus visits, S.A.T. workshops and admission interviews.

The ASPIRA Health Careers Program is a multi-level experience for young people interested in a health career. They are exposed to health fairs, health careers workshops, seminars and colloquia. The **ASPIRA** network has a record of success in facilitating admission for Aspirantes into premedical programs and medical schools.

The prohibitive cost of education has deterred many youngsters from obtaining higher education. **ASPIRA** counsels our students with valuable information on financial aid such as the **Mayor's Scholarship Program**, whose awards range from \$100 to \$600. Through Edwin Gould and other foundations and corporations, **ASPIRA** gives scholarships to needy Aspirantes who have a record of high school or college academic achievement.

Staying in college and maintaining a meaningful academic standing takes work. Through the **College Retention Program**, Aspirantes are able to reinforce their academic skills, have some of the pressures eased with career and financial counseling and, generally, tap a support system required for achieving success in college.

The Consolidated Youth Employment Program is designed for the Aspirantes whose goals lie in non-academic fields. **ASPIRA** training courses provide skills training in areas where labor market surveys indicate employment opportunities. **ASPIRA** works hand in hand with the corporate sector in obtaining jobs for these trained young people.



ASPIRA: Advocacy

In 1974, **ASPIRA** initiated a suit against the New York City Board of Education, resulting in the landmark "Consent Decree." This decision affirmed the right of Spanish speaking and other foreign language students to have bilingual education until they reach a level of proficiency in the English language.

More recently, **ASPIRA** of New York conducted research into the condition of Hispanics in secondary and post-secondary education. The New York City Board of Education reports an overall dropout rate of 45 percent. **ASPIRA's** research reveals the problem to be more serious. The overall dropout rate is 68 percent — and Hispanics are the major victims with an 80 percent dropout rate.

In an independent nationwide survey on Hispanic organizations commissioned by Coca-Cola, U.S.A., **ASPIRA** was identified as "the organization best able to meet the needs of the Hispanic community." In May 1984, Coca-Cola, U.S.A., in conjunction with their National Hispanic Education Fund, awarded a \$100,000 grant to **ASPIRA** of New York for the implementation of Project **A.W.A.R.E.** (Aspire to Win Through Academic Retention and Excellence). This demonstration project is designed to impact on the unacceptably high New York City youth dropout rate.

ASPIRA's mission continues to be as relevant today as it was in 1955 when it was first conceived. While estimates of the dropout problem may vary, the fact remains that New York City's youth are confronted with many serious educational problems, of which dropping out is the most serious. **ASPIRA** has a tradition of educational advocacy for the Hispanic community, and we continue to uphold our philosophy of "excellence through education."

ASPIRA of New York, Inc., contends that continued collaborative relationships between business, community and educational institutions are essential in meeting the needs of our most precious resource — our youth.

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